DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 321 IR 012 565

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TITLE Use of Non-Broadcast Channels to Communicate Information in Social Change Situations: Berkeley Anti-Apartheid and Solidarity Poland.
PUB DATE 21 Jan 86
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (Las Vegas, NV, January 16-21, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); Comparative Analysis; Developed Nations; Feedback; Foreign Countries; *Information Dissemination; *Mass Media; *Models; Social Change; Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS *One Way Communication; Poland; *Two Way Communication; United States

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the notion of two-way communication, wherein the receiver can question or challenge the transmitter of the information, and shows how it differs from the one-way forms of communication that are more prevalent in developed countries today. Pointing out that today's broadcast and mass-market print media usually take the form of one-way communication, which is characterized by its speed and ability to reach a large number of people instantly, the paper focuses on the role of gatekeepers (transmitters) in one-way communication as they control and package the information that is disseminated and are not responsive to questions from the receivers (the general populace). The societal and technological changes that have paralleled the move from two-way to one-way communications are also discussed. Using the traditional newspaper as an example, a model is then proposed which incorporates the speed of one-way communication while preserving feedback, i.e., the ability for the receiver to obtain further information and clarification, and to enter into dialogue with the transmitter. Finally, the paper examines two recent social-change situations--the Berkeley Anti-Apartheid Movement and Solidarity Poland--to show the various ways in which the modified two-way communications model has been effective. Diagrams of the models discussed are included. (DJR)

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Use of Non-Broadcast Channels to Communicate Information In Social Change Situations: Berkeley Anti-Apartheid and Solidarity Poland

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Association for Educational Communication & Technology
January 21, 1986

Intro

The rapid growth and breakneck pace characteristic of our modern post-industrial society has dramatically affected the fields of travel, energy, medicine, and warfare. It has also drastically altered the field of communications.

A century ago, when one spoke of *communications*, one meant the interactions taking place between small groups of individuals. Today, *communications* has become a whole field unto itself, and is primarily concerned with forms in which little or no **interaction** takes place. When college students major in *communications*, they don't learn how to interact with one another; they spend their time studying broadcast media, and learning how to talk to (or rather **at**) a large number of people simultaneously.

Communication Models

A basic act of communication involves a **transmitter** (the source of the information) and a **receiver** (the recipient of the information):

Basic One-way Communication

In a normal two-way conversation, people constantly alternate between being transmitters and receivers:

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by Howard Besser

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the notion of two-way communcation, and shows how it differs from traditional one-way forms of communication. It points out how two-way forms are more democratic, but are popularly seen as being too slow and cumbersome in our modern, high-tech world.

It then porposes a model of **modified two-way communications** which incorporates much of the speed of one-way communications, yet preserves democratic elements such as feedback from two-way communications.

Finally, this paper examines two recent social-change situations (the Berkeley Anti-Apartheid Movement and Solidarity Poland) to show the various ways in which the modified two-way communications model has been effective.

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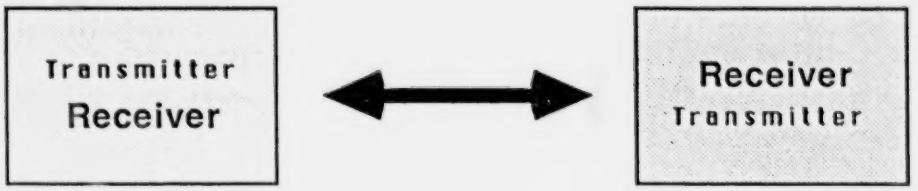
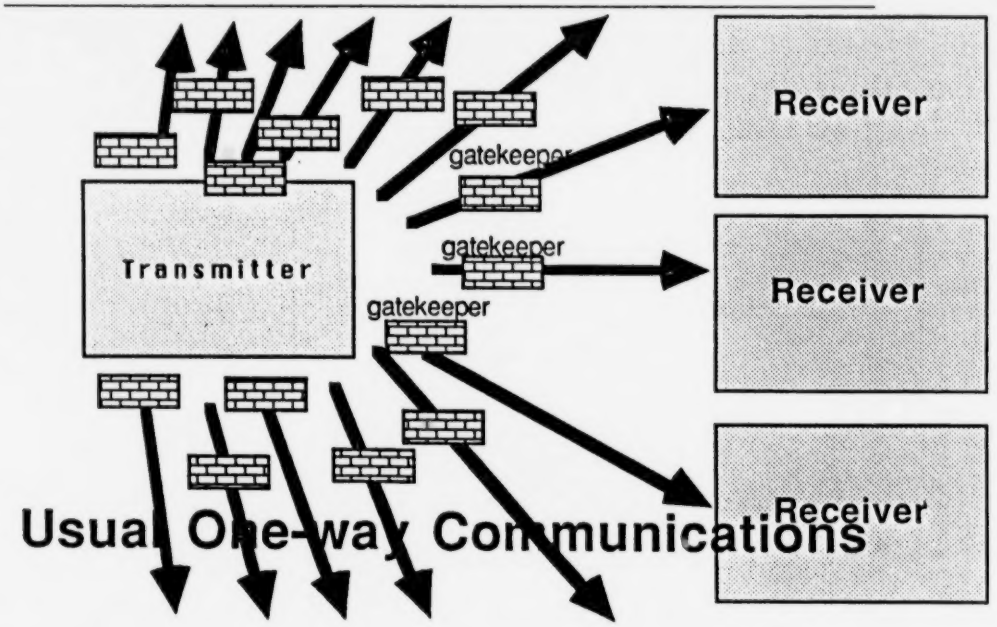


Basic Two-way Communication

Unlike in one-way communications systems, the receiver has the ability to question or challenge the transmitter, or to ask for further clarification. Until recent times, most communication followed this model.

Today's broadcast and mass-market print media usually take the form of a one-way communication, having a single transmitter and multiple (often hundreds of thousands of) receivers with gatekeepers that filter the information at many stages along the way. The role of *gatekeeper* (held by reporters, editors, camera-people) is to filter through and pare down information; the receiver therefore only acquires a very small part of the total information:



With this kind of communication there is no direct form of interaction.[1] The receiver has no chance to question the information s/he has received; s/he must either passively accept it, or change the communication channel.

> *"Any flow of information may be described as two-way and interactive (as when a person is having a conversation with a friend) or as one-way and non-interactive, as when a radio newscast is listened to by an audience. Between these two extremes are intermediate modes of information flow, such as the town meeting or conference, in which much of the flow is one-way, from the speaker(s) to the audience, but the audience has the right of response, counterstatement and questions. In American society, most of the information flow follows the broadcast, non-interactive model: for example, radio, TV, and newspapers. Accordingly, the information is distributed from its central source, and there is little opportunity for people to reply or to influence the content of what they read and hear and see."* [2]

Modern Communications

In developed countries, most news is received either directly or indirectly from a one-way communications system, generally via standard broadcast media such as radio or television, or print media such as newspapers or magazines (which are themselves broadcast in the sense that they are one-way systems with a single transmitter and multiple receivers). Regardless of the actual medium used, two important (and related) characteristics are found throughout today's common forms of communication -- (1) that information can be communicated to tens of thousands, even millions of people simultaneously *and* (2) that this communication travels almost exclusively in a single direction. Though a one-way communications system is a convenient method for distributing information quickly, it is controlled by a very few **transmitters** (the broadcast media) and is not responsive to questions from the **receivers** (the general populace).

The gatekeepers in a one-way system function to turn information dissemination into a mechanism of control. They are "forces which channel information on its way, divert it, alter it, or stop its flow. The specific goals of gatekeepers may be to control or influence political, economic, or social behavior."[3] Yet, in any form of **two-way communication**, each gatekeeper is subject to direct question and examination by his/her receivers. Receivers can even challenge the truth of the information coming from the gatekeeper. In a two-way system the role of gatekeeper can approximate what Patrick Wilson has termed a *personal adviser*,[4] with the receiver able to exert some measure of control over the amount, type, and delivery of information, impossible in a strict one-way system.

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[1]The only interactive options normally available are either simply to refuse to receive the communication, or to write a *Letter to the Editor*, an **extremely** weak form of interaction.

[2]Sandy Emerson, *The Community Memory Project*, **Journal of Community Communications**, 3:1, Fall, 1978, page 6.

[3]Gordon Stevenson, *The Public Library in a Communications Setting*, **Library Quarterly**, 48:4, 1978, page 406.

[4]Patrick Wilson. **Public Knowledge, Private Ignorance**, Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1977, chapter 2.

The characteristic of ***mass*** in communications is related to many other aspects of our modern mass culture. It is a commonly-held assumption that word-of-mouth communications systems, characteristic of all previous societies, are impractical if we are to coordinate information to such a large population, . We assume the need for the immediate transmission of information, therefore communication systems not involving electronic transmission are considered too slow and deemed archaic. The general concern for *flashiness* and *quality* outmodes older and simpler ways of communicating (ie. silent or black & white films, small local performances, etc.). And given the massive amount of information that is depended upon in daily life, unfiltered information is no longer considered acceptable. Information is now packaged as a commodity, not unlike food on the supermarket shelf, and is sold to an enormous number of people by the few corporations which control it. However, it differs from other commodities in that those who sell it still retain it.

Channels of this system are expensive to operate. Not just anyone can become a transmitter of information. In fact, 50 corporations control most of the American media.[5]

This hegemonic concentration of information sources coupled with the movement towards strict **one-way** communications systems (with gatekeepers as filters and only limited avenues for feedback) has shifted the power of communications almost exclusively away from the individual to the few controlling corporations. This shift is reproduced in other spheres of activity as well. The passivity inherent in one-way communications, where the individual cannot ask for clarification or rebuttal is similar to the powerlessness one faces as a consumer of goods and services faced with a complex bureaucracy of intermediaries.

Both societal changes and technological changes have paralleled the move from two-way to one-way communications with an increase in the number of gatekeepers, making it difficult to discern the driving force. Do we have one-way communications systems <u>because</u> someone invented radio and television, or were these technologies invented because information had to be disseminated quickly to a large number of people? Is the desire for rapid and mass dissemination a result of the television age, or was television invented because of those social values? Are gatekeepers protecting receivers from information overload, or are they withholding information to preserve power interests? Did television create a mass society, or did such a society need to create a tool like television?

There are no simple answers. The technology grew in a symbiotic relationship with the society, both answering some of its needs, and creating needs of its own. But clearly, both these technologies and the unidirectional nature of communications are intimately intertwined with the structure of our society and the power relationships in it.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger believes that one-way communications systems effectively serve the people who hold power in our society, keeping the rest of us dependent upon them. "The technical distinction between receivers and transmitters reflects the social division of labor into producers and consumers, which in the consciousness industry becomes of particular political importance. It is based, in the last analysis, on the basic contradiction between the ruling class and the ruled class -- that is to say, between

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[5]Ben Bagdikian, **Media Monopoly**, Boston: Beacon, 1983, pages xv-xvi.

monopoly capital or monopolistic bureaucracy on the one hand and the dependent masses on the other."[6]

Enzensberger would go so far as to say that one-way systems do not really constitute *communication* at all. "In its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver; technically speaking, it reduces feedback to the lowest point compatible with the system."[7] In effect, the concentration on *quantitative* factors in communication (speed, reaching a large number of people) has led to a deterioration in the *quality* of the signal.

Progressive communications theorists believe that there is a place for high-participation (two-way) communications, even in our modern low-participation (one-way, broadcast) society. Wilbur Schramm, citing Cantril's and Allport's findings, concludes that, "Low-participation media would seem to commend themselves for swift and widespread communication of information to individuals." "Higher degrees of social participation tend to create a sense of involvement, a group bond, a circular pattern of influence and decision making. They provide maximum feedback. Thinking back to the social functions of mass communications, . . . the high-participation media would seem to commend themselves particularly for the task of correlating society's response, for the process of exchanging and sharpening opinion."[8]

To summarize, the advantages of a one-way broadcast communications system are its speed and its ability to reach a large number of people instantly. It is, however, highly centralized and tends to reflect and maintain the existing power structure. The advantages of a two-way system are in the area of *feedback* -- the ability for the receiver to obtain further information and clarification, and to enter into a dialogue with the transmitter. This gives the receiver an opportunity to participate which can then be instrumental in molding a group bond.

Just as the **one-way** broadcast communication system has mirrored the socio-political growth of our modern society, **two-way** non-broadcast communication systems have often developed hand-in-hand with movements for social change. In this talk, I look at communication systems used in two such movements: the 1985 **Anti-Apartheid** protests at the University of California at Berkeley, and the 1980 strike in Gdansk Poland that began the **Solidarity** movement there.

For this, I examine how low-technology communications devices can still be used effectively in our high-tech world, and how high-tech devices which have traditionally been used for centralized one-way communications, can be adapted for use in interactive two-

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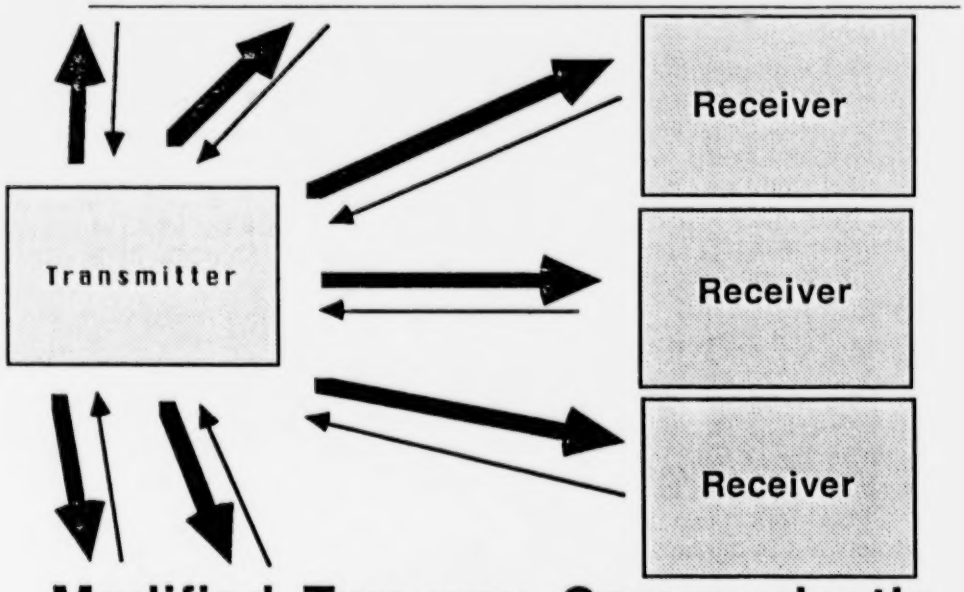
[6]Hans Magnus Enzensberger. *Constituents of a theory of the media* in **The Consciousness Industry: on literature, politics and the new media**, New York: Seabury Press, 1974, page 97.

[7]*ibid.*

[8]Schramm, Wilbur (ed), *The nature of channels* in **The Process and Effects of Mass Communication**, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954, page 89.

way communications. I look at situations where the number of gatekeepers has been minimized. Contrary to the claims of gatekeeper advocates, the participants seem to react favorably to the availability of information, rather than being overwhelmed by *information overload*.

I survey the various forms of two-way communications used in these two movements: the **traditional two-way model** which is fully interactive but slow, and what I term the **modified two-way model** -- where the transmitter reaches many receivers quickly, but each receiver has the opportunity for feedback.



Modified Two-way Communicatic

An example of this **modified two-way communications model** would be a traditional newspaper, bulletin, or newsletter distributed directly by those responsible for its editorial content. The receivers of the information would then have the opportunity to question, ask for further clarification, and argue with the transmitter. This model has the advantage of one-way communication in its speed and ability to reach large numbers of people, along with the interactive qualities of two-way communications.

Berkeley Anti-Apartheid

The Berkeley anti-apartheid movement began in April of 1985. As early as Spring of 1977, over 50 people had been arrested at a Sproul Hall sit-in protesting University of California investments in South Africa, but support for this protest fizzled as school recessed for the summer. In the intervening years, there were occasional protests, but there was no consistent widespread support for a divestment movement until the 1984-1985 school year.

The first militant actions began at a noon rally on April 10 organized by the campus United People of Color (UPC). Much to the dismay of the rally organizers, about 50 of the 200 people attending the rally broke away and began a sit-in on the steps of Sproul Hall. They vowed not to leave until the University answered their demands concerning divestment of UC funds in South Africa. UPC initially refused to support the sit-in as being too militant and adventurous.

The sit-in continued on a 24-hour basis (including a sleep-in), slowly growing in size. Fifty to a hundred people spent the first few nights sleeping outside on the Sproul Hall steps, and 300 to 1,000 people attended daily noon rallies. Early in the morning of April 16, police moved in and arrested 140 protesters, ending the occupation of the steps.

People began making hastily scrawled wall posters calling for a noon rally and posted them in several key locations around the campus. Groups would gather around these posters and ask each other for information about the arrests. By 11 AM the entire campus was abuzz with discussion about the arrests. In offices and classrooms people were asking each other what they knew. Those who had been unsuccessfully trying to foist leaflets on people for weeks were suddenly deluged with requests for information. By noon, 4,000 people showed up in Sproul Plaza for the swiftly organized rally. At this point the protest became a mass movement, attracting thousands of people to various kinds of events on a daily basis.

The speed at which the information about the arrests flowed was literally astounding, considering that broadcast media played almost no role whatsoever. The arrests came too late for the morning papers, and there was little or no coverage on the morning radio. Most of the information came from the posters and from two-way communications.[9] Yet 4,000 people showed up to an ad hoc and spontaneous rally, one of the largest in Sproul Plaza in a dozen years.

The movement, perhaps unselfconsciously, recognized the debt it owed to the postering and leafleting in its early hours, and as it grew it made every effort to promote

[9]In fact, I'd venture to guess that most news of shocking events hits most people through a modified form of interpersonal communication. In this standard *shocking news* model, a few people hear the information through broadcast channels, and quickly spread this to many more people through two-way communication. As I recall, most of the *shocking events* that have occurred during the daytime (when people intermingle more with each other), I have heard about from other people (the *Milk/Moscone killings*, the *Jonestown massacre*, *President Kennedy's assasination*, etc.).

these kinds of communication devices. Likewise, the perceived opposition (the University Administration) made numerous efforts to control these kinds of communications.

During the six week occupation of the Sproul Hall steps, colorful banners proclaiming all kinds of views were prominently displayed. Several public information areas were set up: tables for literature and many ad hoc bulletin boards -- one for news of Berkeley arrests and court cases, another for other US anti-apartheid news (including daily contributions via computer mail from other college campuses), another for news from South Africa, and several for public postering of leaflets, opinions, and graffitti.

The Sproul Plaza area became a kind of information center, playing a role similar to that of the *town square* in pre-technology times. People would gather around the many ad hoc bulletin boards, reading things to each other, and discussing events with total strangers. Those desiring written information to take away with them could choose from the scores of leaflets that were produced on an almost daily basis. If they wanted more information, or to challenge the contents of one of these leaflets, it was likely that they would find the leaflet author sitting right there in the Plaza, very willing to respond or argue. This was an important use of two-way communication without gatekeepers.

People arranged nightly entertainment, most of it informational in relation to the movement. Films on South Africa, poetry on racism, and slide shows on liberation movements were informational entertainment. And though some of these (particularly the films) were one-way communication devices, they certainly were used in a non-traditional way that encouraged some kind of interaction (ie. people did not leave when the film was over, but stayed there and talked for hours).

Protestors made a videotape documentary of their activities, and brought it around to student dormitories the following Fall. The documentary served as an important organizing tool, and encouraged two-way communication between the media makers (both the filmmakers and the subjects of their film) and the receivers.

Two days after the first mass rally, people involved in the sit-in began producing a daily newsletter, the **Biko Plaza News (BPN)**. This newsletter played a central informational role for the movement: outlining the dozens of daily events planned on campus; giving information about the anti-apartheid movement in Berkeley, throughout the country, and in South Africa; and at times even included debates within the movement concerning tactics.

Thousands of issues of the **BPN** were distributed every single day, and the publication continued long past the six week sit-in. People would pick up copies of the **BPN** to use for reference, and if they wanted to question or challenge the publication, some of the editors were always available in the Sproul Plaza area. Or, if they wanted to talk to all the editors at once, or even become a part of the group putting out the newsletter, all they had to do was come to one of the nightly meetings where the following day's newsletter was being produced.

The decision-making structure of the sit-in had served as the model for the open, participatory, gatekeeperless structure of the newsletter. Sit-in participants held daily open meetings to discuss organization, strategy, and tactics. No leaders or representatives were chosen, and the role of discussion moderator rotated from person to person. When the administration demanded that the sit-in choose representatives to negotiate with them, the protesters resisted and made University representatives come to their open meetings.

The participatory structure of the sit-in encouraged people to become involved in any or all phases of the activities. The self-organization included recruiting more people (especially for the sit-in), arranging a daily free meal for hundreds of people, legal defense, information coordination, preparation of nightly entertainment (such as films, poetry, and music), and development of a system to warn against police actions.

An office was set up in the student activities building a block away. To speed communication with the outside world, a two-way radio was set up linking the sit-in area with the office. Since the office had a telephone and a standard radio as well, the two-way radio served as a gateway linking the sit-in to the rest of the traditional communication system.[10] Information about new arrests or court cases could be telephoned in to the office and relayed to the sit-in, and requests for further clarification could be relayed back.

The number and use of two-way radios was greatly augmented in preparation for the May 17 UC Regents meeting in the hills above the Berkeley campus. This event included a second sleep-in in the hills, and announced attempts at a blockade to prevent the Regents from leaving if they failed to vote for divestment. Because of the large number of people, the fear of police action in anticipation of the proposed militant action, and the large terrain between the two sleep-ins, communication had to be more carefully coordinated. Two-way radios were set up in the student activities building (with a telephone connection), at the sit-in in Sproul Plaza, at the sit-in in the hills, and in cars that roved back and forth all night long, trying to pick up signs of police movements.

But what started out as mere two-way communication and coordination of a complex situation, rapidly became a cat-and-mouse game with the police. Electronics experts cracked codes on police frequencies, and protesters purposely said misleading things over the radio in hopes of throwing the police off the track.

Though the sit-in was the spark that touched off the movement, it became only one of many different local forms of protest against apartheid. Many diverse groups did their own part to further the movement. A faculty divestment committee organized many activities, and prepared both a detailed challenge to the UC Treasurer's report on divestment, and their own plan for phased full divestment. Numerous *respectable* groups began a daily ritual of being arrested for blocking the entrance to the University Administration building. Groups of rabbis, priests, merchants, School Board members, and City Council members each had their day for arrests, focusing the attention of the traditional media on the movement.

University Recognized Power of Placards & Displays

One way of judging the perceived effectiveness of communication devices in social change situations is by looking at how far those in power will go to try to suppress these communications channels.

The University Administration recognized the power of these placards and public notices, and took moves to suppress them. Though the administration claimed it was not

[10]Electronic technology has had an incredible centralizing force, moving communications from one-way to two-way. Up until now, the only two-way communication devices have been the telephone and the CB radio. Some futurists predict that the personal computer will usher in a new wave of two-way communication, but that has yet to be seen.

responding to the protests, summertime changes in the student conduct code which "primarily focused on campus free speech regulations"[11] were highly unusual. This coupled with UC participation in a national conference of University Attorneys on "how to close down dissent, prevent disruption and figure out what (the protesters) are trying to do and block them at every step,"[12] including "altering time, place and manner restrictions to control protests," leads one to doubt University claims that changes in the student conduct code were not related to campus disruptions.

For 30 years student organizations had been allowed to chain large placards and signs in the highly-visible Sather Gate area, subject only to minor regulations (size, only one per group, etc.). Over the summer the University tried to completely ban such signs, claiming that they were causing deterioration of the bridge.

The new regulations also specifically forbade "tables or other display paraphernalia" from the Sproul Hall steps, the center of the Spring disturbances.

In fact, the new rules prohibited display material from being "placed on or against, or attached to any structure or natural feature of the campus". And on August 2, a student was arrested when police attempted to remove a sign illegally tied around a campus tree.

On September 4, campus police also began demanding that protesters remove hand-carried signs, citing a section of the penal code making it illegal to interfere with a police officer doing his duty, claiming that the signs were blocking police surveillance cameras. The videotaping issue set off even more vocal protests, and the student government went on record opposing all police videotaping of campus disturbances until such a time as an independent police review board would be set up and establish taping guidelines.[13]

Police use of obscure regulations to limit the demonstrators' transmission of communications had been going on throughout the protest movement. In the second week of the Sproul Plaza sleep-in (April 21), police moved in to pull the plug on the amplification system used for both a loudspeaker and for music, and arrested one person in the ensuing altercation. The police justification for acting was that noise levels were disruptive. This might have been justifiable while classes were in session, or while workers were in surrounding offices. But the police moved in at about 5 PM on a Sunday, a time when the buildings and streets within even amplified earshot of Sproul Plaza are deserted, except for a large contingent of drummers playing bongos. And the electricity powering the loudspeaker was being paid for by the student government, not the University.

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[11] *UC fine-tunes student conduct regulations*, **Daily Californian**, October 14, 1985.

[12] According to United States Student Association Vice President Celia Ham as quoted in *Conference explores campus 'disruption'* , **Daily Californian**, September 18;, 1985. The September 5 and 6 conference which Ham had attended was entitled *Universities and South Africa: Divestment and Campus Disruption*, sponsored by the **National Association of College and University Attorneys**. At this conference, UC Berkeley Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs Michael R. Smith led a panel discussion entitled *Responding to campus disruption.*

[13] *ASUC Senate says no more videotaping*, **Daily Californian**, November 22, 1985.

University Pressures Biko Plaza News

The **Biko Plaza News (BPN)**, being a well-known and widely distributed daily source of information about the anti-apartheid movement on the UC campus, was a constant thorn in the side of the University Administration. On July 11, when a small collective restaurant that leases space in the University's Art Museum took out an ad in the **BPN**, the administration had a chance to retaliate. Assistant Chancellor John Cummins (the University official in charge of negotiating with anti-apartheid protestors) expressed "in the strongest possible terms, our outrage and shock at the Swallow Restaurant advertising in this kind of publication,"[14] and began a campaign to stop the restaurant from advertising in the **BPN**. Threats were made to prevent the restaurant from using the words *University Art Museum* (which constituted their address) in any of their future ads in any publications.[15]

In this society, where the most limiting constraint on *freedom of the press* is financial and the main source of a publication's funding is advertising, an attempt to drive away a publication's advertisers constitutes an encroachment on *freedom of the press.*

The Berkeley Anti-Apartheid Movement began by relying upon many of the most open two-way communication channels, but after a time came to rely upon support through events staged for traditional one-way channels, while still maintaining many of the two-way structures.

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[14]Private memo from **Office of the Chancellor** to University Art Museum Deputy Director Ron Egherman, July 17, 1985.

[15]Private memo from **University Art Museum** Deputy Director Ronald Egherman to Swallow Restaurant, July 19, 1985.

Poland 1980

Background

On July 1, 1980 the Polish government raised the price of meat. Immediately a strike broke out in Lublin where workers demanded higher wages to pay for the hike in food prices. The strike was quickly settled when the government granted wage concessions. But for several weeks afterwards, as word of government concessions spread to other towns, workers elsewhere walked off their jobs, making demands similar to those won in Lublin.

News about the strikes got around by word of mouth and the underground press, which had been formed mainly by intellectual dissidents in the wake of the uprisings in 1976 for the expressed purpose of informing people of labor unrest in Poland.[16]

By the end of July, this massive wave of rebellion had receded somewhat. But on August 14, workers occupied the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk.[17] The government, recognizing that the publication of news about successful strike actions had contributed to other workers' defiance, did its best to suppress news of this occupation.

As the strike grew to encompass the entire Gdansk area, the authorities did everything they could to cut off communications with the strike area. For most of the two and a half-week strike the government allowed no telephone, telegraph or mail service between the Gdansk area and the rest of the country. For the first week, none of the traditional forms of mass communications (Polish newspapers, radio or television) published any mention of the strike. But word did get out through the workers' own efforts and eventually the government found that it could no longer ignore the situation. So on August 22 it began covering the strike (in negative terms, of course) on its own broadcast media. Though the news blackout was lifted, the interruption of two-way communication (telephone, telegraph, postal service) was maintained.

How did news spread during a news blackout?

Though the government had cut off telephone and telegraph service leading to the Gdansk area, it did not tamper with communications within the Gdansk area itself, or with communications throughout the rest of the country. Only trunk lines leading to Gdansk were cut. Thus, local telephone and telegraph service operated normally within the Gdansk region, and all facilities operated normally throughout the rest of the country, excluding contact with Gdansk.

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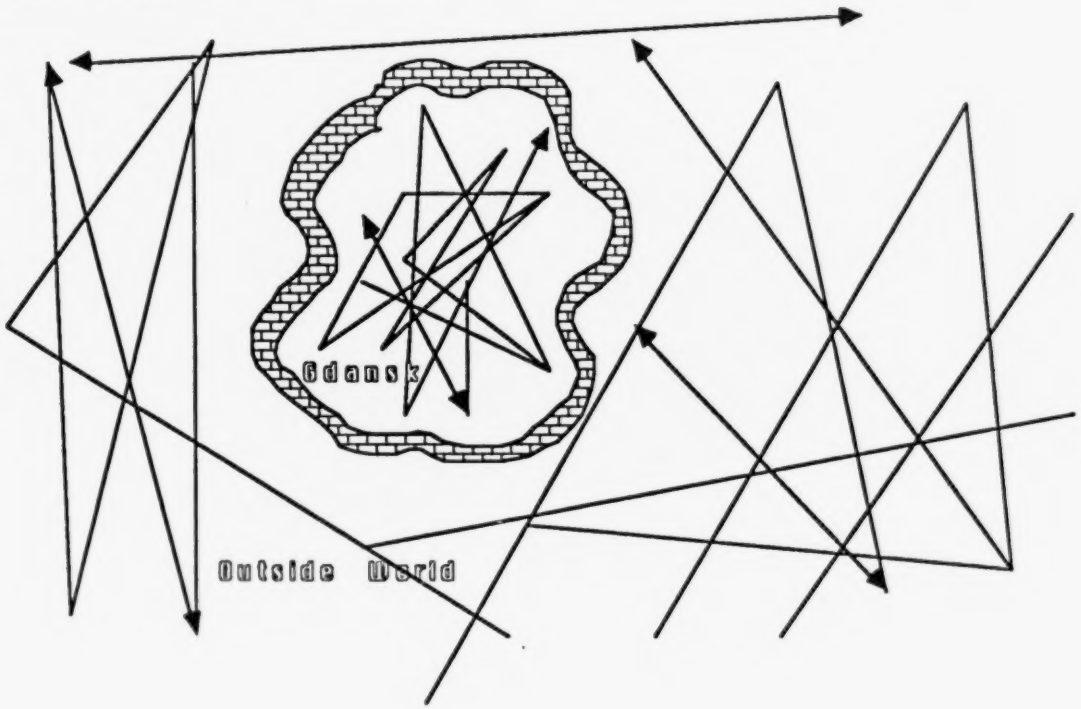
[16]For a more complete account of the previous history of the Polish underground press and its role in the summer 1980 strikes, see Tadeusz Walendowski's *The Polish Summer of 1980* in **Columbia Journalism Review**, Nov/Dec 1980, pages 31-35.

[17]This occupation was not demanding wage concessions as most strikes before then had (Gdansk shipyard workers had already won those), but was in reaction to the firing of a union militant.



Even though a barrier interrupted the normal flow of communications to and from the Gdansk area, no attempt was made to physically quarantine that part of the country. There was a significant movement across the paths of the broken communication wires by people who gathered information (using various means to collect it) on one side of the barrier and carried it to the other side (distributing it by various means). So, in effect, normal communications could take place on each side of this barrier; but information just had to be hand-carried across.

Another method that helped to bridge the communication gap was the Western press. Journalists already in Poland when the occupation began had access into and out of the Gdansk area. Most news services would make daily runs from Gdansk to Warsaw, where they could transmit reports to their main offices which in turn could broadcast them over the airwaves back into Poland. Though the Soviets tried to jam Western news broadcasts entering the USSR, the Poles made no such attempt. Thus, it was possible for people both in Gdansk and the rest of Poland to hear news of what was going on in Gdansk from Western broadcasting stations. Significantly, this information had also been *physically* carried over the barrier of cut lines.

The only traditional broadcast communications received on a large scale in the Gdansk area were the nightly BBC and Radio Free Europe news programs. Every night people gathered around the few radios that had been brought to the MKS floor. Since these Western stations were fairly accurate in reporting the daily events the people in Gdansk had participated in, and since they knew that the Polish and Russian stations were telling lies (or saying nothing at all) about the same events, the workers tended to regard **everything** that these Western sources said with much less skepticism than they would the Eastern sources. (This relatively uncritical reception of western information is, of course, somewhat problematic.)

Inside the Shipyard

Soon after the takeover of the Lenin Shipyards by those supporting other workers on strike, workers in even more enterprises throughout the Gdansk area began to strike in solidarity. Within a few weeks, work had stopped at over 500 workplaces. To coordinate the strikes and factory occupations the workers formed the Inter-Factory Strike Committee (MKS) to take on all major coordinative functions, from feeding and clothing the 16,000 workers occupying the Lenin Shipyards to formulating demands and negotiating with the government. But the major function of the MKS was to help facilitate the flow of opinions among those involved in the strike.

The MKS, composed of representatives of all striking enterprises in the greater Gdansk area, met daily in a central building in the Gdansk Lenin Shipyards. Debates on how to manage their struggle went on all day and into the evening hours.

Probably because distrust of the party and the government was so high, there was a concerted effort to insure the widest possible dissemination of the greatest amount of information, and as much participation as possible in the decision-making process. Proposals were brought to the floor of the MKS meeting room and debated among the delegates. All of these proceedings, even the negotiations with the government, were broadcast over loudspeakers that the workers had hooked up and placed at the factory's gates. This system allowed almost all the workers occupying the shipyards and anyone from the surrounding area who cared to come to the shipyard gates, to hear the entire proceedings. This made use of the advantages of a one-way communications system.

Most people gathered at the gate areas to listen to the proceedings, the occupying workers on the inside and others on the outside. (Only very limited travel was allowed through the gates.) When the general MKS sessions recessed, a microphone was hooked into the speaker system at each gate. This *open mike* allowed the people around each gate to debate among themselves what the MKS had just been discussing or other subjects of their own choosing. So here we have a situation where an initial one-way communication became two-way, leading to open discussion and debate, and even leading to feedback to those who created the initial one-way transmissions.

The communication of information to the other enterprises on strike went hand-in-hand with the distribution of political power. Delegates would come to the MKS representing their struck factories, serve several days, then go back with audio tapes of the proceedings to inform their fellow workers about what had happened. The strikers would then discuss the information and send a new delegate back to the MKS to represent their feelings.

The number of tape-recorders on the floor of the MKS was absolutely astounding. The MKS thought it was important enough to set up a large bulk-recording area to encourage delegates to record the proceedings for the people they represented, but even this was not large enough. In this case, modern technology was used to give further, more detailed, unfiltered information.

The striking workers were able to go far beyond the passive reception of messages that takes place in one-way communication systems. They could ask for further, more detailed information. Or they could ask that their comments and opinions be transmitted

back to the MKS through their delegate. Those with strong opinions were likely to become delegates themselves, reducing the possibility that their messages would be confounded by someone else. Though the delegates did play the role of gatekeepers, they made every possible attempt (including the use of audio tapes of the proceedings) to minimize the gatekeeper's function of interpreting/filtering information. And most importantly, these gatekeepers met face-to-face with the information receivers, and were subject to question or even replacement by them. This was two-way communication at its finest. Information flowed in both directions, and gatekeeping was minimized.

Although the workers had no printing technology at all at the start of the shipyard occupation, the MKS tried to print a daily bulletin. Several days after the strike began, intellectual dissidents brought their press to the shipyards and showed the workers how to operate it. It was a very old hand-operated machine (one cannot just go to a store and buy a press in Poland, nor easily import one from abroad), and each sheet had to be waved in the air for several minutes to dry before being read. The quality of the image was very poor by American standards. But it was all they had, and it was basically readable.

When the bulletins were printed, shipyard workers grabbed them up before they had even dried. Some would take them to the gates of the shipyard and fling them over to the waiting crowd. Though the print media is a strongly one-way form of communication, in this case it engendered two-way communication. When the bulletins were thrown into the crowd outside the gate, the first person to snatch up a bulletin would begin to read it aloud, becoming a receiver and a transmitter at the same time. The discussions of the bulletin that followed, some of them over the open mike, had a good chance of eventually getting back to the bulletin editors. Reading the leaflets became a social activity.

The posting of these bulletins every 50 yards or so on the walls outside the shipyards was another one-way channel that engendered two-way communication. Instead of being read in isolation (as print media usually is), these posted bulletins attracted groups of people who discussed their contents with each other, and had the opportunity to become broadcast transmitters themselves on the open mike. They sent their opinions to the people surrounding them and also back to MKS members, completing the second half of the two-way communications.

Many people came from other parts of Poland to read these bulletins and participate in the discussions around the gates of the shipyards. In Gdansk they would sometimes act as transmitters, but would generally receive information. Back at their homes and workplaces, these people would transmit the information they had received in Gdansk to their friends and acquaintances. These transmissions were also two-way, since the person who had visited Gdansk could be questioned about information s/he neglected, and someone else could even be sent to Gdansk for more information. Here is a good example once again of a very libertarian form of gatekeeping.

For the first few days of the strike, negotiations between the government and the strikers' representatives were broadcast live to the entire shipyard area. It was probably one of the few times in history that people had the opportunity to actually hear both their government and their labor representatives negotiating over the future of their lives. People were able to get a much more accurate picture of what was happening in the negotiation room than would have been possible from accounts handed from person to person -- many of whom would have had a vested interest in changing the story. This form of information flow made it difficult for either the government or the representatives to distort the *truth* .

Everyone seemed to distrust the government. When an offer was made for free elections within the existing government-controlled unions (as an alternative to the *Free*

Unions the MKS was demanding), a gigantic roar of laughter, quickly followed by cat-calls, swept the crowd of about 500 where I was standing. Not surprisingly, the government demanded that the negotiations be returned to private. Several days later, they were.

The Polish government's efforts to sever normal channels of communications during the Gdansk strike led to new forms of communication, many of which developed as two-way rather than one-way channels. The number and function of gatekeepers that separate people from information was minimized, and participation was maximized. Denied access to the commonplace one-way communication channels, (newspapers, radio, television), the Gdansk strikers and their supporters formed new channels based on a much higher degree of participation. In short, the Polish people began to explore new channels leading to a democratization of communication.

Conclusion

For a variety of reasons, social protest movements have little or no access to standard broadcast media, and are forced to play games with the media (ie. staging media events) in order to spread information about their protests.[18] Because of this, they need to seek out other channels for disseminating information.

In the social protest situatons I have studied, the new channels chosen have consciously incorporated feedback mechanisms. Most of these channels were not one-way channels, but modified forms of two-way communications, with the minimization or elimination of gatekeeping. The use of channels like this gave those involved the opportunity for a greater degree of participation, an important element in building and maintaining a social change movement.

Looking at these situations, we see that more interactive, two-way channels can still be used to rapidly disseminate information, that the elimination of gatekeepers does not necessarily lead to an undesirable degree of information overload, and that high-participation communication channels are not too slow or archaic for our high-tech fast-paced society.

[18]See especially Todd Gitlin's **The Whole World is Watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left**, Berkeley: UC Press, 1980. See also Herbert Gans' **Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time**, New York: Vintage, 1980 and Edward Jay Epstein's **News From Nowhere**, New York: Vintage, 1973.